

## AN ENGLISHMAN WHO COLLABORATED WITH THE SPANISH ARMADA

THE PANIC which seized the people of England as the awesome Spanish Armada neared their coasts in 1588 and the universal thanksgiving which followed its defeat have often been described. Not nearly so well known is the fact that there *were* Englishmen—a pitiable but passionate minority—who wished the Armada well and to whom its departure from the ports of Spain was the reward of years of earnest effort. One man's part in that effort, covering the period between 1580 and 1588, is the subject of the present study. According to Catholic historians, this one man is the prototype of all the guileful Jesuits who creep furtively in and out of the plots of numerous English novels.

Of the Englishmen who collaborated with the Spanish Armada the most indefatigable was Father Robert Parsons. Born in 1546, Robert Parsons grew up an English Protestant and at Oxford became one of the fellows of Balliol College. He was converted to Catholicism in 1574 while traveling on the Continent, and the following year, in Rome, he joined the vigorous new Society of Jesus.

On the Continent Parsons met for the first time in his life a unanimous band of really determined English Catholics. Of those who had left England at Elizabeth's accession to escape punishment for their part in the Marian persecution or simply to enjoy freedom of religion, all but the most uncompromising had returned in 1571 when, in retaliation against Pius V's bull excommunicating Elizabeth, Parliament passed an act against "fugitives over the seas"—inflicting loss of all property on those who persisted in exiling themselves.<sup>1</sup>

When Parsons joined the émigrés, their acknowledged

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leader (the Moses of their Exile, they called him) was Dr. William Allen, another convert, who had left Oxford in 1561. In 1568 Allen founded an English seminary at Douai in the Spanish Netherlands for the purpose of training English priests to serve the faithful at home. The seminary was supported by Philip II, by the Pope, by the Duc de Guise, and by wealthy Catholics both in England and abroad. Originally Allen's plan was to have a corps of English priests ready to return home when, at Elizabeth's death or deposition, a Catholic monarch—probably Mary Stuart—should restore the country to the Church. The idea of smuggling priests into a Protestant England came a few years later. The first seminary priests, carefully disguised, ventured into England in 1574; and the execution of Cuthbert Mayne under the new penal laws in 1577 provided the school with its first martyr-alumnus. In 1578 Dr. Allen moved the seminary to Rheims, where it was under the protection of the Duc de Guise, but in 1593 it was returned to Douai.<sup>2</sup>

So many promising young men fled from the English universities to train for Roman Catholic priesthood that Allen was unable to take care of them all; and soon after Robert Parsons joined the Jesuits he was instrumental in organizing a second seminary—the English College at Rome, which still flourishes today. Unlike the Douai-Rheims establishment, the English College usually had a Jesuit as its rector and a majority of Jesuits on its teaching staff, though few of the English priests trained there were themselves accepted into the elite Society of Jesus.

Until 1580, only secular priests were sent back on the dangerous mission to England, but in that year Robert Parsons and Edmund Campion made the journey too—the first Jesuits of English nationality ever to do so. Parsons traveled in the gold-laced buff suit and the plumed hat of

an army officer returning from the Low Countries. Campion disguised himself as a jewel merchant.

During the first decade of Elizabeth's reign the government had regarded the opinions held by the Papists with considerable tolerance and had made progress in its efforts to win them away from the old religion by moderate means. But Mary Stuart's unwelcome arrival in 1568 stimulated a Catholic reaction. The English nobles who attempted an uprising in her favor in 1569 received encouragement from the new Pope, Pius V, less diplomatic than his immediate predecessors. In 1570 Pius' bull, excommunicating and deposing the "pretended queen" (Elizabeth) and releasing her subjects from all vows of allegiance to her, excited fears that an invasion was imminent; and the government began to regard Papists as potential traitors. The coming of young priests from the English seminaries a few years later increased the alarm. Then, in July 1579, a token force of Italians and Spaniards, with a commission in the Pope's name, landed in Ireland to assist in a rebellion against England—a rebellion which was still raging when Parsons and Campion started on their mission.

For the reputation of the Society of Jesus the choice of Robert Parsons as a missionary was unfortunate. English Jesuits like Edmund Campion and Robert Southwell won grudging admiration even from their Protestant contemporaries, and intervening time has added luster to their names. But the activities of Father Parsons provided the foundation for the persistent English concept of the scheming Jesuit.<sup>3</sup> Protestant historians have usually described the mission of Parsons and Campion as political. Catholic historians have stressed its spiritual aims. The *written* instructions which the two men brought from the General of the Jesuits (and which they repeatedly showed to their English co-

religionists) commanded them to regard their mission as purely spiritual and to mix in no affairs of state. On the whole, Campion seems to have followed these instructions. But the behavior of Parsons, whom the General had appointed Superior of the mission, supports the suspicion that he had received oral instructions which differed considerably from those which he brought in writing to show in England. Father Campion dealt personally with individuals for the salvation of their souls. Father Parsons, possibly recalling the mass conversion of the Angles by St. Augustine, became more interested in creating political conditions favorable to a sudden and complete return of the nation to the orthodox Church. Parsons arrived in England in June 1580. Certainly before the end of the year he had conferred secretly in London with the Spanish ambassador, Don Bernardino de Mendoza. It was a step that would meet with the approval of some of the English Catholics on the Continent, but one by no means agreeable to all Catholics in England. Eventually Parsons and the pro-Spanish faction of English Catholics came to be more hated even than Protestant persecutors by the majority of the Catholics in England.

Throughout 1580 persecution of lay Catholics was usually limited to more rigorous collection of the recusancy fines and imprisonment of those actually detected harboring priests from Rheims or Rome. On the other hand, these priests themselves were technically guilty of treason under an act forbidding anyone to bring into England communications from the Pope. When apprehended, they were tried, not as heretics, but as traitors, the government being anxious to avoid the appearance of religious persecution. In the Tower cruel torture was sometimes employed to wring from them confessions of conspiracy against the queen and the nation.

In January 1581 a royal proclamation was issued in which

Elizabeth, pointing out that the English seminaries abroad had been established by the Pope to seduce Englishmen from their true religion and from their loyalty to their country, commanded parents and guardians of children being educated on the Continent to cause them to return to England within four months and forbade sending abroad any further support for such children. Parliament was convened a week later to increase the powers of the Council in defending the realm. An act was passed declaring that all persons pretending to any power of absolving subjects from their allegiance or practicing to withdraw them to the See of Rome should be held guilty of high treason. The growing fear of Spain, the worry of the Irish rebellion, and the rising number of recusants at home (suspected, rightly or wrongly, of readiness to support any foreign effort to depose Elizabeth)—all these resulted in tightening security measures and consequent severity against Catholics.

Early in June 1581 Morton, the Protestant regent of Scotland, was executed. The fifteen-year-old King James fell under the fascinating influence of his cousin D'Aubigny, Earl of Lennox. Though Lennox was posing as a convinced Presbyterian, Catholics believed with good reason that he was Catholic at heart, and they hoped consequently that the young king might be won to their religion. From his hiding place in England, Father Parsons, after conferring with Mendoza about the matter, dispatched William Watts, a secular priest, to Scotland. He instructed Watts to confer if possible with James himself, and, if not, with noblemen such as Lennox or Lord Seton. He was to convince the king or his advisers that James's chances of succeeding to the throne of England depended on the backing of the English Catholics. He was to pledge James the support of the Catholics, and especially of the priests, if James should become

reconciled with the religion of his unfortunate mother.<sup>4</sup> Apparently Mendoza gave Watts authority to promise that if James should become Catholic the Pope and the Spanish king would support English Catholics in releasing Mary Stuart from prison and declaring James heir to the English throne; if not, Catholics would stiffly oppose James's claim.<sup>5</sup>

During the summer two other English Jesuits slipped back into England—Father Jasper Heywood (uncle of John Donne) and Father William Holt. Parsons was now Superior of a mission of four.<sup>6</sup>

Evelyn Waugh, in his *Life of Campion*, has given the heroic story of this first Jesuit mission in England: the anxious landing at Dover and the encounter with inspectors, the joyous welcome by Catholics in London, the missionary excursions through the provinces, the eloquent sermons at gatherings reminiscent of those held in the ancient Catacombs, the "priest holes" built behind sliding panels in Catholic mansions, the arrest of Campion and his meeting with Elizabeth, the disputations with Anglican ministers, the long, sickening trial with its foregone conclusion, the brutal hanging and drawing and quartering.<sup>7</sup>

Campion was arrested on July 4, 1581. The news reached Parsons in London, and he sent a servant to see and report the procession which brought Campion to the Tower. The search for Catholic secular priests and for Campion's three fellow Jesuits was intensified. Word reached Parsons that a group of priests and lay Catholics had arranged for passage into France and could take him with them. Parsons left England sometime in August 1581. He never returned.

It is not likely that the companions with whom he escaped into France realized that their companion was Father Parsons, whose recent activities had made him famous—or notorious. During the next two years, though he was always

in safe Catholic countries, when writing to Catholics in England and to the rector of the English College in Rome, Parsons encouraged the belief that his letters were from London or from one of the northern shires. He must have known that his departure might be interpreted as a cowardly flight, thus injuring the Catholic cause and the prestige of the Society of Jesus. Undoubtedly his epistles to the rector were read, for inspiration, to the English boys training at the College to go on the dangerous mission themselves. In a letter to the General of his order, written in October 1581,<sup>8</sup> he explained that his having left England was known only to the Archbishop of Rouen, his host; to Dr. Allen; to the Archbishop of Glasgow, Mary Stuart's ambassador at Paris; and to a few others. One of the many plausible reasons which he gave for coming to France was the need to confer with Dr. Allen and with Mary's ambassador about matters which could not safely be put in writing.

The conferences with Dr. Allen and the Archbishop of Glasgow were more than satisfactory, and other affairs were progressing rapidly. Watts, the priest dispatched by Parsons and Mendoza to Scotland, had sent back a servant with a letter that was forwarded to Parsons in Rouen. Watts, who had been received by the young King, had arranged for Parsons himself to meet the Catholic Lord Seton in Scotland on September 26. Receiving this letter too late to attend the rendezvous, Parsons wrote to Seton, to Watts, and to Catholics in London, suggesting that they open negotiations at once with the Queen of Scots. Now, in writing to Aquaviva, General of the Society of Jesus, he asked approval of his activities.<sup>9</sup> He explained that he had already made arrangements with a merchant to smuggle Catholic books into Scotland. "It is indeed the lack of books of this sort that has caused Scotland to be affected by heresy to a much great

extent than England." But he continued to postpone his own journey to Scotland.

Although Parsons was a good writer and a prolific one, his most significant books were written after the period covered by this study; and space does not permit discussion even of those published between 1580 and 1588. During the dangerous year of his mission in England he had managed to set up a secret press and to publish and distribute three pamphlets written by himself, as well as others by Father Campion. Now throughout the winter of 1581-82 he was busy writing other books to be printed at his private press in Rouen. The first of these, *De Persecutione Anglicana Epistola*, reproduced letters from priests in the Tower of London describing the instruments of torture there and the constancy of the prisoners. Reprinted at Rome in 1582, with plates illustrating the racking and hanging of the martyrs, this treatise was distributed over Europe at the Pope's command to stimulate contributions to support Allen's seminary at Rheims. Parsons' *Christian Directorie*, his one work most nearly free from political and polemical purposes, was also written during his stay at Rouen.

Undoubtedly the principal aim of Robert Parsons' life was to restore England to the Catholic Church. If he had ever felt that this end could be accomplished by purely spiritual means, he was now convinced that only a revolution abetted by armies from abroad could effect it. The enterprise he was now engaged in was the first of a series of invasion projects to which he consecrated himself—body, soul, and powerful intellect—for the next ten years and more.

In England Mendoza and the Catholic party continued to receive and pass on to Parsons encouraging reports from the secular priest Watts in Scotland. Before the end of 1581 Father William Holt, one of the only two Jesuits in



England, was also sent to Scotland.<sup>10</sup> He returned to London in January and gave Mendoza the details of the plot now under way: Lennox, Seton, and others sympathetic with the Catholic cause were ready for action. With the help of two thousand foreign troops they believed they could subdue the heretics in Scotland and stave off any force England might send across the border. They wanted Mary Stuart, whose liberation was part of the plan, to write to Gregory XIII and Philip II asking for assistance.

Mendoza sent word to Philip II and to Mary Stuart about the plot, and Father Holt, before returning to Scotland, wrote to Dr. Allen about it. Parsons, busy with his press at Rouen, received letters from both Allen and Mendoza urging him to hasten his departure for Scotland. The ambassador wrote that "it was no time to be writing books when it was a question of the salvation of kingdoms."<sup>11</sup> Instead of going to Scotland himself, however, Parsons (after consulting the Duc de Guise, who had been involved in similar plots for several years) decided to send Father Creighton, a Scottish Jesuit, to confer with Lennox and Seton. The French king, friendly to Elizabeth and suspicious of both Philip II and the Guise family, was not aware of the enterprise.

Several conferences were held in Paris in April and May 1582 by Guise, the Archbishop of Glasgow, the papal Nuncio, the Spanish Ambassador to France, the Jesuit Provincial of France, Dr. Allen, Father Parsons, and finally Father Creighton, who had by then returned from Scotland. A memorial addressed to Gregory XIII and Philip II was drawn up by Parsons, outlining the planned invasion and stressing the necessity for its immediate execution. It was decided that Parsons should go to Spain and Creighton to Rome to present the case as forcibly as possible. Haste was essential, since it was agreed that late September of the same year was the best time for landing the surprise troops on the coast of

Scotland. The two Jesuit envoys set out at the end of May, Parsons traveling to Spain under the pseudonym of Ricardo Melino.

Our only aim in this scheme [began the memorial which Parsons had prepared] is the restoration of the Catholic faith in the two kingdoms of England and Scotland, the liberation of the Queen of Scotland from prison, the preservation of the young King in body and soul from the snares of the heretics and from being confirmed in heresy, the liberation of the Catholics who are distressed and persecuted for their faith in England and elsewhere, and, finally, the restoration of God's Church in those regions, and quietude in the other neighboring countries which have been troubled now for so many years by the malice of these heretics. It seems that God our Lord has now given us a suitable opportunity to attain this purpose. . . .<sup>12</sup>

There followed persuasive reasons for believing that immediate action would result in a quick, easy victory for Catholicism. The plan was to subdue Scotland first and then march on England, where the Catholics and many others would surely rise to support the invaders. According to the memorial there would be practically no resistance, since the majority of the Scots, disgusted with the avarice and wicked lives of the heretical pseudo-priests, would welcome their suppression. In England two-thirds of the people were Catholics and, because of the recent laws against them, more disaffected than ever before. There had never been a ruler so universally hated as Elizabeth, and many of the heretics, who were divided into two or three factions, would welcome her overthrow. All Catholics without exception and large numbers of the heretics themselves acknowledged the claims of the Queen of Scots and her son to the succession.

Specifically the needs were these: six or eight thousand infantry troops, arms to equip an additional three thousand in England, and pay for the army for six months. The troops should muster in Spain, as if designed for the wars in the

Low Countries, and then land on the west coast of Scotland in late September, after the crops had been gathered. The Pope and the Spanish king must provide the general of the army with papal legates and a Council of State to institute the new governments of England and Scotland. The Pope should appoint a Bishop of Durham, who would slip into Scotland and wait in a private home until the invasion forces arrived. (Parsons had previously handed the Nuncio at Paris a memorial recommending Dr. Allen's appointment to this see, strategically located between London and Scotland.) A proclamation should be prepared explaining to the Scots that the purpose of the landing was to support James's claim to the English throne and to defend the nobles from the tyranny of the Protestant ministers. A second proclamation, *to be published only when the army was ready to enter England*, should announce that the army had come to put into effect the bull of excommunication. The Pope should issue a new bull granting plenary indulgence to all who rose in the Catholic cause and excommunicating all who defended Elizabeth.

While in general it represented the consensus of all the conspirators, the memorial was typical of Robert Parsons. The insistence on haste, the sanguine overrating of advantages and underrating of obstacles, the assertion that his own views were those of all English Catholics, and withal the practical decision to employ subterfuge and use for a while the help of the heretics as well as the faithful were all characteristic of a man dominated by a singleness of purpose.

Philip II, however, was not one to be swept off his feet by zealous optimism. Parsons arrived in Lisbon, where Philip was residing, on June 15, 1582. For several weeks he had to deal through the secretary, Don Juan de Idiaquez, since the king was suffering from the gout. Philip, though sympathetic, wanted facts and figures rather than opinions and

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wishful estimates. Letters from Mendoza in London gave him a very different impression of Catholic strength in England from that in Parsons' memorial.

In the meantime communications from Rome indicated that Gregory XIII, while heartily endorsing "the Enterprise," expected Spain to furnish all the troops and bear the greater part of the expense. When Parsons assured the king and his advisers that the Pope would provide more assistance than he first promised, they asked him tartly whether he had the authority to make such assertions. The zealot was facing practical statesmen. His few extant letters written from Spain at this time show that during these long weeks of negotiation he was in alternate moods of hope and despair.<sup>13</sup>

Finally word came of the Raid of Ruthven. On August 22 a party of Protestant nobles had seized King James while he was out hunting, and Lennox had fled to Dumbarton. The magnificent plot was nipped in the bud.

A serious illness kept Father Parsons in Spain for another half-year, and it was late in the spring of 1583 before he got back to Paris. Nevertheless, the time in Spain had not been wasted. Philip had promised to recommend Allen's promotion to the cardinalate, and—in an audience granted Parsons before his final departure for France—had shown interest in a *second* invasion project which was now being plotted. Though the death of Lennox in May eliminated a valuable ally, both Mary Stuart from her prison in England and Lord Seton in Scotland were urging Guise to go forward with the Enterprise. In July the seventeen-year-old James escaped from the Protestants who had captured him the year before, and in August he wrote to Guise that when the latter landed his forces in England he would himself lead an army to assist them in establishing his mother as Queen of England. The new plan was for Guise and his brother, the Duc de Mayenne, heading troops of their own and others borrowed

from the Spanish army in the Netherlands, to land simultaneously at different points on the English coast. They would need papal sanction and a fleet from Spain to convey them. Another memorial was addressed to the Pope and Philip; and Father Parsons, who took part in the consultations, was chosen to take the copy to Rome. Thomas Morgan and Charles Paget, younger brother to Lord Paget, were now included in the conspiracy; and Paget returned to England to gather information about suitable landing places and to prepare the English Catholics for the invasion.

For Parsons to appear in Rome meant ending a two-year pretense. The Pope and General of the Jesuits, of course, knew that the Ricardo Melino who had visited Philip in Lisbon was Robert Parsons, but the rector and the scholars at the English College had been kept in the dark and, because Parsons had continued to date his letters from London, naturally believed that he was still risking his life in England. The truth—or part of it—must be explained before Parsons appeared in Rome, where his face was well known. On August 24, 1583, therefore, he wrote from Paris to the College. The rector had probably heard, he began, that for some months he had been in France. "Yet I am planning and dealing with English matters every day; and I ask and anticipate nothing more than, as soon as may be, to be allowed to return to England by the indulgence of those whose wishes and judgment or whose orders keep me here."<sup>14</sup>

Ostensibly, then, Parsons returned to Rome in 1583 (for the first time since his departure in 1580) to discuss with the General of the Jesuits and the rector of the College business of the spiritual mission in England. Much more urgent, however, was the matter of the Enterprise. Here Parsons was successful in obtaining from Gregory XIII two breves considered necessary to the success of the invasion. One was a renewal of Pius V's excommunication and deposition of

Elizabeth. The other appointed Dr. Allen Bishop of Durham. Neither of the breves was ever published.

Parsons was back in Paris on October 19. In November the magistrates in London arrested a young man named Francis Throgmorton, whose frequent visits to the Spanish embassy had put him under suspicion. In his rooms were found lists of the Catholics in the plot, plans of harbors sketched by Charles Paget and described as suitable for landing foreign forces, treatises defending Mary's title to the throne, and libels against Elizabeth. After cruel torture, Throgmorton confessed all. Though his confession was not immediately made public, his arrest alone caused a panic among Catholics. Mendoza estimated that by mid-winter eleven thousand were under arrest of one sort or other. Lord Paget escaped to France, but the Earls of Arundel and Northumberland, who had arranged the landing place for Guise with Lord Paget's brother, were taken and sent to the Tower.<sup>15</sup> In January 1584 Mendoza was summoned before the Privy Council, harshly rated for his part in the conspiracy, and ordered to leave England.

In the same year Alençon died, leaving the Huguenot King Henri of Navarre heir presumptive to the French throne; and the Duc de Guise became more interested in the French succession than in Anglo-Scottish affairs. James, despairing of help from the Continent, then began negotiations with Elizabeth which eventually terminated in an alliance between England and Scotland. Plans for the Spanish invasion continued, but henceforth, with surprise no longer possible, they had to be on the grand scale of open war.

A strong anti-Jesuit faction was now forming among the English exiles in Flanders and France. Charles Paget and Thomas Morgan, gentlemen connected with noble Catholic families, were devoted to Mary Stuart and upon her recommendation had been included in the earlier invasion plans.

Both men suspected their Spanish confederates of being more interested in adding England to Philip's empire than in establishing a Stuart on the throne, and both objected to the major roles which Dr. Allen and Father Parsons were playing in the plans. It was absurd, they contended, that gentlemen should take orders from priests. Catholics like Lord Paget, Charles's brother, who fled to the Continent after Throgmorton's arrest, soon allied themselves either with the Jesuits or with their opponents. Each faction had to work in pretended amity with the other against Elizabeth, the common enemy, but mutual suspicions were mounting.

Of the considerable number of letters which Parsons is known to have written to the imprisoned Queen of Scots, only two are extant and these not in his own hand. The Jesuit wrote in a private code which he had arranged with Mary. These two letters were intercepted by Sir Francis Walsingham and deciphered by his agent, Phelippes. They survive among the State Papers in the handwriting of Phelippes. In the first, written at Rouen on October 10, 1584, Father Parsons informs Mary that he and Dr. Allen had come almost to despair of temporal help in their endeavor to restore England to the Church and had resolved to follow only a spiritual course, when unexpectedly instructions came from Spain for them to discuss with the Prince of Parma in the Netherlands new plans for the Enterprise. Parma is now their only hope. If *he* urges the invasion, Philip may be persuaded to act. But "every man nowadays whatsoever he pretend seeketh his own interest," and the surest way of winning Parma's support is for the Queen of Scots to hint that she might marry him and share with him the rewards of the Enterprise. Father Parsons has talked cautiously with Parma about the matter, he adds, and can assure the Queen that the idea of the marriage interests him very much. The second letter, written several months later, in-

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forms Mary that Parsons has had no reply from her but that he still has hopes that good news is about to break.<sup>16</sup>

In August 1585, after a sojourn of several months with Parma in Flanders, Parsons joined Dr. Allen at Rheims and traveled with him to Rome, where the Jesuit remained until after the defeat of the Armada and Allen until his death in 1594.

From Rome Parsons continued to direct the mission of Jesuits to England. In May 1586 he sent out two more fathers and accompanied them on the first stage of their journey from Rome. (One of these men, reminiscent of Cam-pion in many ways, was Robert Southwell, the poet whose "Burning Babe" ranks high in English devotional verse. The other, a prudent administrator like Parsons, was Henry Garnet, who eluded capture for twenty years, but was seized and executed in 1606 for his implication in the Gunpowder Plot.) During this year Parsons resided sometimes at the English College, sometimes at house of the Jesuits.<sup>17</sup>

But unquestionably the main interest of Dr. Allen and Father Parsons between 1585 and 1588 was in advancing plans for the Enterprise. Gregory XIII died in 1585 and Six-tus V, his successor, though equally interested in the over-throw of heresy, was jealous of Spanish power and suspicious of the motives inducing Philip to invade England.<sup>18</sup> Dr. Allen and Father Parsons, on the contrary, became, in the eyes of their enemies, completely "hispaniolated" at this period. Convinced that only Spanish power could save England from heresy and encouraged by the fact that Philip and Elizabeth were now at open war, they gradually abandoned their efforts to convert James of Scotland to Catholicism, lost interest in Mary Stuart as a candidate for the crown even before her execution, and, to reward Philip for the great project he was about to undertake, resolved to support his own nebulous claim to the throne of England.



By early 1587, Robert Parsons, now forty years old, had embarked upon a course of action which appears to have been a violation of one of the strictest principles of his Society. In March, before the news of Mary's execution had reached his ears, he handed the Spanish ambassador in Rome a memorandum addressed to Idiaquez, Philip's Secretary of State. In this document Parsons listed several reasons why the king should *not* discuss with Sixtus V his interest in the English crown until after the success of the Armada: the Pope and the cardinals were incapable of secrecy and the success of the enterprise would certainly be jeopardized. The Pope, if advised of Philip's temporal reasons for the invasion, would be less generous with his financial support. The King of France, the Duc de Guise, the Queen of Scots, the Doge of Venice, and the English and Scottish Catholics would be less ready to cooperate. On the other hand, Parsons suggested, if it were announced that the sole purpose of the invasion was to restore the true faith and avenge the martyrs, no Catholic would dare oppose it. The Pope would urge the French king to support it. Allen and others could conscientiously persuade the English Catholics that the only thing aimed at was the reformation of religion. And since the Queen of Scots would probably be killed by the heretics before she could be liberated, there would be nobody to oppose Philip's claim.<sup>19</sup>

Another memorial from Parsons and Allen, written a few days later, after Mary's death was known, announced to Philip that in considering his claim to the English throne they had met with no difficulties "which gave us scruples of conscience or which ought to give them to His Majesty." They had studied all English histories and genealogies available in Rome. The king of Scotland's title, which he derived from his mother, originated from a daughter of Henry

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VII, but Allen and Parsons had found that Henry had not actually united the houses of Lancaster and York. As for those living who based their claims to the throne on York ancestry alone, they were all disqualified by heresy or otherwise. On the Lancaster side, the Portuguese royal family had a claim derived from a daughter of John of Gaunt, and now that Philip was king of Portugal, he inherited this title. Furthermore, both Mary Tudor and Mary Stuart had left wills naming Philip heir to their claims. Despite all this, however, Allen and Parsons advised the King *not* to publish his intention until after the invasion.<sup>20</sup>

These memoranda indicate that Dr. Allen and Father Parsons, in order to obtain Philip's aid, were willing to wink at deceiving the Pope. Sixtus was personally jealous of Philip's power. French cardinals and envoys, anxious to prevent further Spanish aggrandisement, were pleading for a crusade against Geneva or against the Turks as a substitute for the one against England. There were those who still hoped to convert the King of Scotland. For a time Sixtus even entertained the hope that Elizabeth herself might yet be converted. To connive at the further deception of a man—even a Pope—already so self-deceived must have been justified in the minds of Dr. Allen and Father Parsons by their conviction that the restoration of England to the Church was a sacred duty outweighing every other consideration. Yet to the Jesuit, whose Society prided itself on especial obedience to the Pope, the decision can not have been an easy one.

It is uncertain whether the General of the Society of Jesus knew that Parsons was discussing such matters with the Spanish ambassador. Certainly Father Creighton, the Scottish Jesuit, knew nothing about it. As Scotsmen and Catholics, Creighton and others still hoped to convert James VI and took it for granted that the impending invasion had as

one of its purposes securing James's title to the succession. Parsons and Allen, according to a letter from Olivarez to Philip written on July 10, 1587,

. . . have thought it better for the present not to undeceive them with regard to this fancy . . . but they go on temporizing with them; and at the same time, knowing how much better his Majesty's rule will suit the English and also the inconveniences of being ruled by the Scotch, they employ themselves of their own movement in writing books in proof of this to be scattered through England when God shall cause the moment to arrive.<sup>21</sup>

In later years Robert Parsons regarded his part in the elevation of Dr. Allen to the cardinalate as one of his most gratifying accomplishments. The King of Spain had his own reasons for putting Allen under obligation to him. An English cardinal sympathetic with Spain would be useful in supporting his claim to the English throne. Allen would become Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Chancellor of England. For several years Olivarez, Philip's ambassador, importuned with the reluctant Pope for Allen's election—a secret election, he recommended, in order that it might not suggest to the English government that the invasion was imminent. After Mary Stuart's death the ambassador pointed out that Sixtus could explain the new cardinalate as necessary in order to fill the place Mary had held for twenty years as champion of the English Catholics. Olivarez finally forced the promotion through on August 7, 1587. He informed the Pope that the expedition was ready to sail and showed him faked instructions which he said Philip, believing the promotion had already been effected, had sent to the new Cardinal of England.<sup>22</sup> But there was still some truth in Allen's own statement: "Next under Heaven Father Parsons made me Cardinal."

Parma's army in the Netherlands was prepared in 1587 to coördinate with the Armada, but the damage inflicted by

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Drake's raids on the Spanish harbors delayed the expedition another year. In February 1588 Parsons dispatched two English Jesuits, William Holt (who had been so active in Scotland) and Joseph Cresswell, to accompany Parma on the invasion. All Europe was expecting daily to hear that the Spanish fleet was on the seas, and Parsons believed that probably the two missionaries would arrive in Flanders after the invasion of England had already been accomplished. "May God our Lord grant that they find you in England," he wrote to Parma in the letter introducing Fathers Holt and Cresswell; "our Cardinal and I shall hope to follow them soon." The *written* instructions given to the two Jesuits instructed them to behave themselves modestly in the new Catholic England and devote themselves strictly to spiritual affairs.<sup>23</sup>

Parsons had obtained a renewal of Pius V's excommunication of Elizabeth when the Enterprise headed by the Duc de Guise was being plotted. Now, to give the Armada religious sanction and secure a Catholic uprising to assist Parma's army, Sixtus V—despite his distrust of Philip—authorized the publication of an English broadside renewing the bull of 1570 and threatening the excommunication of all who opposed the Spanish forces.<sup>24</sup> At the same time a pastoral *Admonition* from Cardinal Allen to the people of England was printed in Flanders to be distributed at the landing of Parma's troops. Tierney summarizes this *Admonition*:

This publication, the most offensive, perhaps, of the many offensive libels sent forth by the party to which Allen had attached himself, . . . in a tone of the most scurrilous invective, denounced the character and conduct of the queen; portrayed her as the offspring of adultery and incest, a heretic and the maintainer of heretics, a persecutor of God's church, a lascivious tyrant, and an unholy perjurer; and concluded by calling upon all persons . . . to rise against a woman odious alike to God and man, to join the liberating army upon its landing, and thus to free themselves from the

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disgrace of having "suffered such a creature, almost thirtie yeares together, to reigne both over their bodies and soules, to the extinguishing not only of religion, but of all chaste livinge and honesty."<sup>25</sup>

Despite efforts to destroy both these documents after the failure of the Armada, copies got into circulation. In 1602 the secular priest William Watson charged Robert Parsons with the authorship of the *Admonition*.

When Holt departed for Flanders, Robert Parsons replaced him as rector *pro tem* of the English College, though it was naturally expected that he too would soon leave Rome to assist in the reconstruction of an England redeemed at last from thirty years of heresy.

The Armada sailed from Spain in May. For long anxious months Rome waited for an authentic report of the outcome, receiving in the meantime alternate rumors of glorious victory and of heartbreaking defeat. When finally the truth was known, Sixtus V, according to letters of the Spanish ambassador, hinted that he had never expected the Spaniards to succeed and began to treat Cardinal Allen with greatest scorn.<sup>26</sup> As for Father Parsons, in less than a month he was on his way to Spain. Fearful that the defeat of the Armada might permanently discourage Philip II, he was bent on instigating yet another attempt, by invasion, to restore England to the Catholic Church.

JOHN E. PARISH

### NOTES

1. Arnold Oskar Meyer, *England and the Catholic Church under Queen Elizabeth* (London, 1916), p. 96.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 252.
3. The persistence of the concept, at least as late as the nineteenth century, is evident in the role assigned to Parsons in unexpurgated editions of Kingsley's *Westward Hol*

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4. John H. Pollen, S.J., *The Counter-Reformation in Scotland* (London, 1921), pp. 31-34.
5. *Letters and Memorials of Father Robert Parsons, S.J.*, Publications of the Catholic Record Society, XXIX (London, 1942), Introduction by Father Hicks, xliii.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 83-90. Officially Parsons was Superior only of the few Jesuits of the English mission, but he regarded himself as having authority over the numerous secular priests as well. For a while this authority went unchallenged.
7. Evelyn Waugh, *Edmund Campion* (London, 1947).
8. *Letters of Parsons*, pp. 107-115.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Pollen, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-34.
11. Robert Parsons, "Punti della Missione d'Inghilterra," *Catholic Record Society Miscellanea*, IV (London, 1907), 57.
12. *Letters of Parsons*, pp. 148-166.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 160-170.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 172-182.
15. James Anthony Froude, *A History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada*, XI (London, 1898), 398-399.
16. *Letters of Parsons*, pp. 246-252, 269-270.
17. *Ibid.*, Introduction, pp. lxx-lxxiii.
18. Sixtus, a Franciscan, was anti-Jesuit as well as anti-Spanish and soon set about to destroy the Society of Jesus. See Antonio Astrain, *Historia de la Compañía de Jesús en la Asistencia de España* (Madrid, 1909), III, 453-475.
19. *Letters of Parsons*, pp. 289-295.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 295-303. Similar genealogies had been devised by the Sainte Ligue as early as 1576 to prove that the Duc de Guise had a better title to the French crown than Henri III. See Maurice Wilkinson, *A History of the League* (Glasgow, 1929), pp. 6-7.
21. T. F. Knox (ed.), *The Letters and Memorials of William Cardinal Allen* (London, 1882), p. ciii.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. civ-cv.
23. *Letters of Parsons*, pp. 313-314, 361-363.
24. Meyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 322-325.
25. M. A. Tierney (ed.), *Dodd's Church History of England* (London, 1840), III, 29.
26. Knox, *op. cit.*, p. cxi.